

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Original) A loose-leaf binder comprising a first base plate (1) and a second base plate (2) abutting against each other on their inner sides and each having a plurality of semicircular binder rings (3, 4) capable of abutting against each other, an elastic sheath (7) for restraining outer edges of both the base plates to permit the binder rings to be opened and closed by elastic upward and downward movements of both the base plates, a second actuating member (11) extending obliquely upwards from one end of the second base plate (2) toward the first base plate (1) and having at the upper end a second finger hooking portion, a first actuating member (10) extending obliquely upwards from one end of the first base plate and intersecting the first actuating member, and a locking member (44) interposed between the first actuating member (10) and the second actuating member (11) to lock the first and second actuating members when the binder rings are closed,

wherein the locking member (44) is a member integrally comprising a pivoted portion. (56) pivotally mounted in the first actuating member (10), an engaging projection (46) which engages with an engaging recess (38) of the second actuating member (11) to prevent a movement of the second actuating member (11), an elastic portion (52) which abuts against an upper surface of the first base plate (1) to urge the engaging projection (46) to the engaging recess (38), and a first finger hooking portion (58) provided at a location opposite to the second finger hooking portion (20), whereby under a condition where the binder rings (3, 4) are closed, movements of both the base plates (1, 2) are prevented against an opening force acting upon the binder rings, and when both the finger hooking portions (20, 58) are pushed toward each other, the engaging projection (46) is disengaged from the second actuating member (11) against the elastic force of the elastic portion (52), and both the base plates (1, 2) are then moved in such directions as to open the binder rings.

2. (Original) The loose-leaf binder according to claim 1, wherein the engaging recess (38) of the second actuating member (11) comprises a first surface (40) provided at a location for preventing the movement of the second actuating member (11), and a second surface (42) on which the engaging projection (46) engages under the influence of the elastic portion, whereby under a condition where the binder rings are closed, the forward end of the engaging projection (46) engages with the first surface (40) to prevent the movement of the first actuating member (10) against an external force in a direction to open the binder rings, and when both the actuating members (10, 11) are pushed in opposite directions, the engaging projection (46) is pivotally moved about the pivoted portion (56, 32) to be disengaged from the engaging recess.

3. (Currently Amended) The loose-leaf binder according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~, wherein the engaging projection (46) and the elastic portion (52) extend substantially parallel to each other from the pivoted portion (56, 32).

4. (Original) The loose-leaf binder according to claim 3, wherein the elastic portion (52) has an arcuate proximal end (53).

5. (New) The loose-leaf binder according to claim 2, wherein the engaging projection (46) and the elastic portion (52) extend substantially parallel to each other from the pivoted portion (56, 32).

6. (New) The loose-leaf binder according to claim 5, wherein the elastic portion (52) has an arcuate proximal end (53).